

Shakespeare Association of America Annual Meeting, St. Louis, 2014
 Seminar: Evidence in Early Modern Drama Studies
 Thursday, 10 April 2014, 3:30 p.m.-5:30 p.m.
 Leader: Travis D. Williams, University of Rhode Island

Abstracts

Joel B. Altman, University of California, Berkeley

What Did Hermione's Statue Look Like?: The Four Ladies of Mantua and the Science of True Opinion

This paper presents some spadework for a chapter in a book on *The Winter's Tale* I've been writing. As its title suggests, I ask what evidence we have regarding the appearance of the "statue" of Leontes' queen in V.iii, and why, aside from Vasari's praise of Giulio Romano's extraordinary *vivacità* in drawing and painting, should a *statue* be attributed to him? I begin by noting the "scenic facts" (textual evidence) concerning the statue, and compare these to what we know of Jacobean monumental sculpture. Next, I ask if there *is* evidence that Giulio designed or sculpted statues and, if he did, what evidence might we muster to argue that Shakespeare could possibly have come to know this? Or that it influenced his conception of Hermione's "statue"? A tall bill of "whats," "whys," and "ifs," but the issue haunts Shakespeare scholarship and is worth pursuing. The paper offers some modest evidential fragments and hypotheses, and some reflections on the problematic nature of such evidence—which may lead to a "true opinion" (though not in Leontes' sense) that advances our understanding of how "that rare Italian master Julio Romano" might have come to "perform" Shakespeare's "statue."

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Paula S. Berggren, Baruch College of the City University of New York

"Is whispering nothing?": The Quest for Evidence in Shakespeare and Kyd

Early Modern Drama may be said to start with *The Spanish Tragedy* by Thomas Kyd, a text that relentlessly questions the reliability of evidence. The play opens with a scene in the classical underworld, where the presiding judges find themselves unable to resolve a crisis in judgment: to what infernal domain ought Andrea, who died in battle, be assigned? Faced with conflicting data, they remand the case to Pluto, who in turn consigns it to Persephone, who deals with it by whispering instructions in the ear of Revenge to resolve the dilemma by passing through the gates of horn, the world of dreams. Deeply influenced by Kyd's undermining of the foundations of belief, Shakespeare examines the problem of evidence in many of his plays. Building on the dramatic gestures and stage properties that bespeak evidentiary proof in *The Spanish Tragedy*—the bloody cloth, the empty box, the letter, and the whisper—Shakespeare's plays investigate even more unsettling failures of belief. If Hieronimo was afraid to credit the letter written in blood because he had seen too much treachery against those who seized such bait, for Shakespeare's tormented heroes the problem of evidence takes a different form. Claudio, Othello, Posthumus, and Leontes credit false evidence, often of their own invention. Finally, in *The Winter's Tale*, Leontes, who begins by interpreting whispers to validate his delusions, is allowed to transcend misunderstanding and skepticism and arrive at truth. Nevertheless, the play

moves beyond the realm of jurisprudence that the material proofs of Perdita's identity would satisfy and leaves us in a world where only grace and faith suffice. Since that is not the world we live in, Kyd and Shakespeare still have lessons to teach us.

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J. P. Conlan, University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus
Shakespeare among the Gentiles: How the Federal Rules of Evidence Cast True Light on the Origins of the Deposing Scene in *Richard II*

The dismissive attitude of editors who claim that editing ought not be considered a forensic activity belies the fact that, as they theorize how to best assemble the intellectual property that survives to us from past centuries, they nonetheless could be made responsible under the law for criminal libel and torts at false light for the willful misrepresentation of a playwright's work. No better is both the caution against false-light editing and the utility of employing evidentiary rules demonstrated than in the consideration of the origins of the Deposing Scene in Shakespeare's *Richard II*, where the theory frequently advanced by textual critics and literary historians that the play was censored casts aspersions on Shakespeare as both a playwright and as a subject obedient to the law, allegations so defamatory that they fall into the heartland of libel *per se*. Purely speculative, the theory rests on no evidence that would be admissible under the Federal Rules of Evidence; a product of legal ignorance, the theory conveys a fundamental misunderstanding of the juridical quality of Richard's speech in the scene, and, factually misleading, the theory disguises from the readers of Shakespeare's plays that the simplest explanation of the textual evidence is that Shakespeare's company frequently used printed quartos as their promptbooks that Shakespeare updated from time to time by adding passages and altering scenes, and that it was the 1598 third Quarto of *Richard II* that Shakespeare updated more than once when the play was revived for performance in the reign of King James.

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Imtiaz Habib, Old Dominion University
Factuality in *Hamlet*, and *Richard II*: Evidence in Early Modern Literary Studies, and the Value of the Humanities

I take as my context the current attacks in the public sphere on literary and Humanistic studies, exemplifying that context as a resurgence of Frederick Crews's denunciation in the 90s of contemporary literary-critical theoretical work as an unverifiable, unmethodical, and coterie, self-justifying practice that has disqualified literary studies as a discipline in the public curriculum. My essay will argue that counterfactuality is the method of literary studies and it is only that counterfactuality which can describe the poetics of the human and the politics of facticity, and explain the pre-actional phenomenal world from and in which experiential events can occur. I will develop my argument with Jacques Lezra's comments about the inability of historiography to know facts, the remarks of Lisa Gitelman and others about the oxymoronic nature of "raw

data,” and Lorna Hutson’s explanation of the invention of suspicion in the forensic evidentiary rhetoric of Elizabethan legal writing and popular English theatrical practice alike. Exemplifying this discussion in the essay will be an examination of the valuably contestatory regime of evidence and facts in *Hamlet* and *Richard II*, ending with some remarks about the nature of the very different challenge of the counterfactuality of black studies in the early modern moment within the present Anglo-American academy.

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James Hirsh, Georgia State University

The Establishment and Early Development of the Late Renaissance Dramatic Convention of Self-Addressed Speech: Evidence versus Scholarly Orthodoxy

One of the most conspicuous and artistically important features of late Renaissance English drama was the convention whereby soliloquies by characters engaged in the fictional action represented self-addressed speeches as a matter of course. Plentiful, unambiguous, varied, and conspicuous evidence demonstrates that this was the governing convention in operation throughout the period. And yet many post-Renaissance commentators have asserted that soliloquies in late Renaissance drama were meant to represent orations knowingly addressed by characters to playgoers. The present essay catalogues over two hundred unambiguous markers of self-address in four plays that were landmarks in the establishment and early development of the convention: *The Spanish Tragedy*, *Dr. Faustus*, *Richard III*, and *Romeo and Juliet*. The paper then documents the glaring discrepancy between this vast array of evidence and assertions made by influential scholars. That discrepancy is evidence that the study of cultural history does not yet constitute a discipline, a field in which theories are routinely and rigorously tested against evidence.

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Ivan Lupic, Stanford University

Tudor Interludes in *The Book of Sir Thomas More*: Evidence and Interpretation

My paper reconsiders the role of the Tudor interlude in *Sir Thomas More*, a heavily collaborative play recently included in the Arden Shakespeare series. I am particularly interested in the fact that *The Marriage of Wit and Wisdom*, one of the interludes offered by the players and eventually chosen by More for performance on account of its “liberal argument,” does not agree with *The Marriage of Wit and Wisdom* as we know it from the only surviving manuscript. The extremely learned, and as extremely speculative, explanation offered by Giorgio Melchiori, the most influential researcher of the play’s sources, will be subjected here to critical scrutiny in an attempt to see to what extent our claims about *Sir Thomas More* and its sources are based on evidence and to what extent they are a product of the larger assumptions we entertain about the early modern dramatic record.

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Maria Sequeira Mendes, Escola Superior Teatro e Cinema (Lisbon Conservatoire)
Iago's Lesson

Flattery and sycophancy are terms of art often used to describe Iago, but descriptions of the play tend to associate both terms, thus depriving sycophancy of its autonomous meaning. The Greek word *kolakeia*, *κολακεία*, included the two senses, in its naming of flatterers and sycophants – a class of informers in Ancient Greece who were paid to bring to court those suspected of improper behaviour. Distinguishing these terms in *Othello* will hopefully help us draw a parallel between Iago and the tale bearers of the polis who, like him, were apt rhetoricians of a lower social status.

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Zsolt Mohi, University of Kansas
From Token to Evidence: The Journey of the Handkerchief in Shakespeare's *Othello*

In the course of its passage from Desdemona through Iago and finally to Bianca, the handkerchief does not merely change from an overloaded token into incriminating evidence, but it moves from one signifying order to another: from a symbol that carries its referent in itself, as it did in the Egyptian magic known as Hermetism, into a sign that points at something beyond itself in accordance with the western tradition of semiotics. From the point of view of the reason of state that Iago represents in the play, the complexity of female identity (an unknowable self behind a mutable persona) is not merely an epistemological problem but a security risk. Therefore, the life force of female inwardness has to be appropriated and its depth made transparent in terms of a forced literalness of signification. Adopting this viewpoint, Othello renounces Desdemona's love to secure his position in Venice. However, once he realizes that he has thus cut himself off from what he calls the "fountain from the which my current runs," he attempts to break out of the paralyzing signifying regime of empire and to restore the unity of sign and meaning in the handkerchief as a token to connect again to his origins.

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Heather Murray, The College of Coastal Georgia

"Behold the reason urging me to this": Contextualizing Evidence in Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*

In early modern revenge tragedy, revengers rely heavily upon evidence to distinguish themselves from common criminals; they go to great lengths to demonstrate that their acts of violence are not random but deserved. Achieving this objective requires the consent of and participation by the larger community, whose response to revenge can be difficult for the revenger to shape. Therefore, this evidence must be contextualized and carefully presented by the revenger. In Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*, the Spanish court is negatively affected by two murders. During the course of the play, competing desires to control and shape information cause multiple stories to circulate about the deaths of Don Andrea and Horatio. After killing his son's aristocratic murderers, Hieronimo explains his motives to the assembled court and then commits

suicide, but events do not go as planned. Members of the stage audience, misunderstanding what has been said, respond by questioning each other about the very information just provided. The King of Spain and the Viceroy of Portugal survive the last act, but they are left without progeny after the deaths of Lorenzo, Bel-imperia, and Balthazar, which profoundly affects the future of their countries. Hieronimo has succeeded in his revenge insofar as regime change will necessarily occur, but he has failed in that the rightness of his cause is not recognized. Those left behind at the Spanish court do not understand that a grieving parent wanted to receive justice for his child's murder.

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Jonathan Walker, Portland State University
The Self-Evidence of Didascalia

Comprised of stage directions, speech headings, and other paratextual matter, didascalia are at once indispensable features of dramatic documents and by far the easiest text to ignore. This paper considers the textual status of didascalia in relation to characters' lines and proposes that, through their perceived structural stability, stage directions and speech headings bestow upon dramatic dialogue an impression of immediacy in exchange for didascalia's transparency. The first question that will need to be addressed is how we read didascalia and dialogue differentially, using the one largely for informational purposes while enlisting the other as evidence for most of our scholarly claims. The seminar description asks: "What are the buried assumptions of our engagements with evidence?" One such buried assumption, I want to suggest, is that characters' lines are unmediated, a form of "direct speech." I argue instead that characters' speeches are by themselves opaque because they tend to lack the contexts and origins that would make the utterances meaningful. Dramatic lines, in other words, only become intelligible—and therefore eligible as literary evidence—after being draped in the apparent self-evidence of didascalia, which depletes the significance of stage directions and speech headings, rendering them transparent and unremarkable to our customary practices of reading.

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Helen M. Whall, College of the Holy Cross
The Evidence of Performance: *Commedia dell'arte* and *The Tempest*

The plethora of texts advanced as sources for *The Tempest* is perhaps only matched by the paucity of scholarly agreement about those texts as *valid* sources. Editors and critics of *The Tempest* have discussed Vergil and Ovid, Lord Strachey and Montaigne, Ben Jonson and Christopher Marlowe as having written works that influenced Shakespeare's writing of *The Tempest*. But is an "influence" the same as a source? What about an "inspiration"? Are verbatim texts the only true sources? The only reliable evidence? Historically, the *verbatim* text, the "word for word" parallel text, has dominated discussions of verifiable Shakespearean sources. The *Chronicles* are clear sources for the History plays; English translations of Plutarch and Ovid and Italian novellas stream into the tragedies and comedies with reassuring force. *The Tempest*, however, refuses to follow words back to words in any way that unifies its tributaries. Recent work in transnational criticism, however, has made clear that performance itself should be

examined as for its source evidence, especially for plays generated in the early days of vernacular theater. This paper will consider *commedia dell'arte*—both described and transcribed—as a true source for *The Tempest*, Shakespeare's most meta-theatrical play.